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ABSTRACT

A survey of teachers who had taken a course on behavior problems in the public schools at Florida Technological University was conducted to determine the effectiveness of this particular course. The results of this survey are analyzed and discussed. A questionnaire, formulated in a Likert scale format, was developed to provide information in six areas: (1) personal data about subjects; (2) concerns about classroom behavior and student discipline; (3) beliefs about causes of discipline problems; (4) effectiveness of major concepts, theories, and techniques included in the college behavior problems course for actual classroom application; (5) relative effectiveness of various classroom activities included in the behavior problems course; and (6) further comments relative to the survey. The most overwhelming statement made by respondents was that they consider the attitudes of parents and families to be a leading cause of discipline problems. Student self-concept and learning problems were also considered causes of problems by both elementary and secondary teachers. In evaluating the effectiveness of the college course on behavior problems, the strongest preference for a particular approach used in the course was the humanistic approach. Little difference was found in the responses of elementary and secondary teachers. A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report. (JD)

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GRADUATE STUDIES RESEARCH GRANT

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT RELATED TO STUDENT DISCIPLINE: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE TAKEN THE GRADUATE COURSE, BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Final Project Report

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September 29, 1978

Submitted to Dr. Alan Fickett, Division of Sponsored Research

Copies to Dr. David Hernandez, Chairman
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Background and Proprosal for Research

"Lack of Discipline" again topped the list of concerns about education listed by a random sample of 1,539 adults surveyed in the 1978 Gallup Poll on public attitudes toward education (Gallup, 1978). For the past ten years, concern about student discipline has led the list in this annual poll in all but one year (see also Gallup, 1975, 1976, 1977). A survey of teachers and school administrators undertaken by Florida Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington indicated that educators share these concerns of the general public about classroom behavior and student discipline. "Keeping an orderly classroom is the No. 1 asset for a good teacher," according to those surveyed (Sentinel Star, October 9, 1975, p. 9B).

To address this concern, a study was undertaken by the researchers to find out specifically what the concerns of a selected group of educators (primarily classroom teachers) are in the area of classroom management and student behavior, what they feel the causes of these problems are, and how effective they feel a graduate level course in the College of Education at Florida Technological University was in helping them cope with these problems.

Since 1971, the College of Education has provided each quarter one or more sections of a course for graduate students (mostly teachers) called "Behavior Problems in the Public Schools." In this course, concerns about discipline and behavior in schools were addressed, and specific techniques were studied and discussed for dealing with problems. The total population of students who had taken this course were chosen as the sample for this study, since they could provide information both on current concerns of educators and also provide feedback in the further development of the course.

Description of Study

The subject population to be surveyed consisted of 1,155 former graduate students who had taken the course, "Behavior Problems in the Public Schools," prior to the beginning of this project (January, 1978). The names and addresses of the members of this population were generated by the computer during the initial month of the project.

A questionnaire was developed to provide information in six areas of importance to the purposes of the survey. These areas were as follows:

A. Personal Data about Subjects

B. Concerns about Classroom Behavior and Student Discipline

C. Beliefs about Causes of Discipline Problems

D. Effectiveness of Major Concepts, Theories, and Techniques Included in Behavior Problems Course for Actual Classroom Application

E. Relative Effectiveness of Various Classroom Activities Included in Behavior Problems Course

F. Further Comments Relative to the Survey

The questionnaire was formulated in a Likert scale format and was mailed to the target population on March 17, 1978. A postage-paid return envelope was included with each survey. Copies of the letter to participants and the survey questionnaire are included in the Appendix.

Over the next four months, 373 questionnaires were returned (32 percent of those sent out); these were used to compile data for computer analysis. A Crosstabs program was run using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences format in the FTU computer system. Responses were tabulated for the total group of former graduate students responding, and additional tabulations were made for several sub-categories of respondents, including

elementary teachers, secondary teachers, male and female teachers, teachers of varying experience levels, and teachers of varying grade levels of past and current teaching. At the present time, analysis of computer printouts has been completed for the total group responses in categories of "High Concern," "Strong Cause," "Highly Effective," and "Highly Beneficial" for the items surveyed and in the categories of "Little or No Concern," "Little Cause," "Not Very Effective," and "Not Very Beneficial," for the same items. These were felt to be the items of most interest since they represent strong positive or negative feelings. Items ranked of "Moderate" concern, cause, effectiveness, or benefit and comments included on returned questionnaires were reserved for further analyses at a future time. Responses of elementary and secondary teachers were compared, but analysis of the data on other categories of teachers (sex, experience level, and so on) was also reserved for the future.

Results of the Data Analysis

Table I shows the rank order of items of "Great Concern" to the total group of respondents relative to classroom management and student discipline. The two items receiving the greatest percentages of "Great Concern" responses were "Low student self-concept" (44.9 percent) and "Failure to finish work" (44.1 percent). "Lack of respect for teachers," "Dishonesty," "Excessive talking," "Lack of respect for peers," "Noisy behavior," "Lack of preparation," and "Stealing" were other items of "Great Concern" to more than 25 percent of those responding to the survey.

By contrast, Table II shows the rank order to items of "Little or No Concern" to respondents. The item of least concern was "Sex-related

TABLE I

Rank Order of Behavior Problems of "Great Concern" to Teachers

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Aspects of Classroom Behavior	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Low Student self-concept	44.9	158	1
Failure to finish work	44.1	157	2
Lack of respect for teachers	37.9	133	3
Dishonesty	37.0	129	4
Excessive talking	36.0	128	5
Lack of respect for peers	35.6	125	6
Noisy behavior	33.9	119	7
Lack of preparation	31.9	112	8
Stealing	27.1	94	9
Ignoring school rules	25.0	87	10
Destruction of property	24.1	83	11
Lack of student involvement	20.9	72	12
Fighting	20.7	72	13
Withdrawn behavior	20.1	70	14
"Class Clown" behavior	19.2	67	15
Truancy	17.3	60	16
Drug-related problems	14.2	49	17
Profanity	11.6	40	18
Tardiness	10.0	35	19
Sex-related behavior	5.8	20	20

TABLE II

Rank Order of Behavior Problems of "Little or no Concern" to Teachers

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Aspects of Classroom Behavior	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Sex-related behavior	67.8	234	1
Profanity	57.5	199	2
Drug-related behavior	56.4	195	3
Tardiness	56.2	196	4
Truancy	50.6	175	5
Withdrawn behavior	46.6	162	6
Fighting	40.8	142	7
Destruction of property	39.8	137	8
Stealing	38.3	133	9
"Class Clown" behavior	33.5	117	10
Lack of student involvement	32.3	111	11
Ignoring school rules	29.3	102	12
Noisy behavior	26.8	94	13
Lack of respect for teachers	24.2	85	14
Lack of preparation	23.6	83	15
Excessive talking	22.8	81	16
Lack of respect for peers	20.5	72	17
Low student self-concept	17.6	62	18
Dishonesty	15.5	54	19
Failure to finish work	14.3	51	20

behavior," with 67.8 percent of the total respondents listing this in the category of least concern. Other items of low concern were "Profanity," "Drug-related behavior," "Tardiness," "Truancy, "Withdrawn Behavior," and "Fighting." More than 40 percent of the total respondents placed each of these in the category of least concern.

Table III shows the ranking of items which the respondents considered as "strong causes" of discipline and behavior problems in schools. "Parent/family" attitudes outranked all other items in this category, with 89.1 percent of respondents placing it in the "Strong Cause" category. "Student self-concept" (ranked in this category by 51.7 percent) and "Learning problems" (ranked by 48.7 percent) were other items high in this ranking. "Socio-economic problems," "Teacher-caused problems," and "School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)" rated less concern as shown in Tables III and IV, although "Socio-economic problems" were rated a "Strong Cause" by 31.8 percent of those responding. Less than one percent of respondents ranked "Parent/family problems" as an item of "Little Cause" for problems.

Tables V and VI show rank orders for items representing the various concepts and techniques presented in the course "Behavior Problems in the Public Schools," Table V showing the ranking of approaches rated "Highly Effective" and Table VI showing the ranking of items considered "Not Very Effective" by respondents. "Humanistic approaches" (34.3 percent of responses) and "Reality Therapy techniques" (33.3 percent of responses) led the list of approaches rated "Highly Effective," with "Discipline and the Law" and "Transactional Analysis" (24.6 percent and 22.6 percent responses, respectively) leading the list of approaches considered "Not Very Effective."

TABLE III

Rank Order of Items Rated as "Strong Cause" of or Relation to

Discipline Problems (Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Related Items Which Cause Discipline Problems	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Parent/family attitudes	89.1	326	1
Student self-concept	51.7	187	2
Learning problems	48.7	175	3
Socio-economic problems	31.8	114	4
Teacher-caused problems	18.3	65	5
School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)	15.2	52	6
Other (see list)	14.8	54	7

TABLE IV

Rank Order of Items Rated as "Little Cause" of or Relation to

Discipline Problems (Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Related Items Which Cause Discipline Problems	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
School-caused problems	32.7	112	1
Teacher-caused problems	21.6	77	2
Socio-economic problems	15.9	57	3
Student self-concept	8.8	32	4
Learning problems	3.9	14	5
Parent/family problems	0.8	3	6
Other	-	-	-

TABLE V

Rank Order of Effectiveness of Concepts and Techniques of Various Approaches in Dealing with Discipline Problems in the Classroom (Elementary and Secondary Combined) Rated "Highly"

Identification of Various Concepts and Techniques	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Humanistic approaches (Rogers)	34.3	116	1
Reality Therapy techniques (Glasser)	33.3	115	2
Self-concept theories (Combs, Purkey)	27.0	91	3
Behavior modification techniques (Madsens, Skinner)	26.9	94	4
Teacher Effectiveness Training techniques (Gordon)	26.2	89	5
Values Clarification techniques (Simon, et al)	23.3	80	6
Logical Consequences (Dreikurs)	16.8	56	7
Moral Development concepts (Piaget, Kohlberg)	12.9	44	8
Transactional Analysis (James, Jongewald, Harris)	12.2	42	9
Discipline and the law	7.5	25	10
Others	7.3	26	11

TABLE VI

Rank Order of Effectiveness of Concepts and Techniques of Various Approaches in Dealing with Discipline Problems in the Classroom (Elementary and Secondary Combined) Rated "Not Very"

Identification of Various Concepts and Techniques	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Discipline and the law	24.6	82	1
Transactional Analysis	22.6	78	2
Values Clarification	19.2	66	3
Moral Development	18.2	62	4
Teacher Effectiveness Training	16.5	56	5
Behavior Modification	15.4	54	6
Humanistic Approaches	12.1	41	7
Logical Consequences	9.0	30	8
Self-concept theories	7.1	24	9
Reality Therapy	5.7	54	10
Other	0.3	1	11

TABLE VII

Rank Order of Class Activities in Behavior Problems Rated "Highly Beneficial"(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Identification of class activities	Percentages of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Small group discussion	55.6	195	1
Role-playing, games, simulations	41.0	143	2
Group or panel presentations	39.0	134	3
Large group discussions	36.8	129	4
Films and other non-print media	26.0	91	5
Textbook or other assigned readings	25.3	88	6
Project/papers	18.3	64	7
Outside speakers	10.5	36	8
Field trips	7.3	25	9
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	6.9	22	10
Other	4.5	16	11

TABLE VIII

Rank Order of Class Activities in Behavior Problems Rated "Not Very Beneficial"(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Identification of class activities	Percentages of Total Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Project/papers	28.6	100	1
Role-playing, games, simulations	18.1	63	2
Textbook or other assigned readings	18.1	63	2
Group or panel presentations	15.4	53	3
Films and other non-print media	13.7	48	4
Large group discussions	13.1	46	5
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	8.8	28	6
Small group Discussions	6.8	24	7
Outside speakers	4.9	17	8
Field trips	3.8	13	9
Other	0.3	1	10

Tables VII and VIII show"Highly Beneficial" and "Not Very Beneficial" rankings of class activities of the Behavior Problems course. "Small group discussion," "Role-playing, games, simulations," "Group or panel presentations," and "Large group discussions" were the activities ranked "Highly Beneficial" by the largest percentage of respondents; "Project/ papers," "Role-playing, games, simulations," "Textbook or other assigned readings," and "Group or panel presentations" were ranked "Not Very Beneficial" by the largest percentage. The percentage of respondents ranking activities as "Not Very Beneficial" was much lower than the percentage ranking activities "Highly Beneficial," as seen in the tables.

The responses of elementary and secondary teachers were also tabulated separately to see if there were differences in the concerns about behavior at the two levels and to see if different causes of problems were noted. The items ranked of most concern to elementary teachers were the following:

Failure to finish work	48.3 percent
Low student self-concept	44.2 percent
Excessive talking	43.9 percent
Noisy behavior	43.2 percent
Lack of respect for peers	35.9 percent
Lack of respect for teachers	35.6 percent

Problems of most concern to secondary teachers were as follows:

Lack of preparation	49.5 percent
Dishonesty	45.8 percent
Lack of respect for teachers	44.9 percent
Failure to finish work	44.3 percent
Lack of respect for peers	34.6 percent

Of least concern to elementary teachers were the following items:

Sex-related behavior	79.8 percent
Drug-related problems	79.7 percent
Tardiness	73.1 percent
Truancy	62.8 percent
Profanity	58.8 percent

Problems of least concern to secondary teachers were as follows:

Sex-related behavior	61.4 percent
Fighting	58.5 percent
Profanity	56.2 percent
Withdrawn behavior	48.6 percent
Tardiness	40.5 percent

The leading cause of problems cited by both groups of teachers was "Parent/family attitudes," ranked as a "Strong Cause" by 92.7 percent of elementary teachers and 88.0 percent of secondary teachers responding. "Student self-concept" was seen as the second strongest cause of problems by elementary teachers (53.0 percent) and the third strongest cause by secondary teachers (37.0 percent).

Discussion of Findings

By far the most overwhelming statement made by this group of 373 subjects in their responses to the questionnaire was that they consider the attitudes of parents and families to be a leading cause of discipline problems in schools or at least an item strongly related to problems. No other single item received such a definite preference; nearly 90 percent of all respondents and more than 90 percent of the elementary respondents ranked this item as a leading cause of problems. Student self-concept and learning problems were also considered leading causes of problems bv both elementary and secondary teachers and by the total group of respondents, but the percentages of responses for these items were not as great. The school and the teacher were seen by the respondents as much less likely to be causes of discipline problems.

All of the problems and concerns listed received rankings in all categories (great, moderate, and little or no concern), but some problems clearly were of greater concern than others. Percentage-wise, the non-problems (items considered of little or no concern to those surveyed) stood out more clearly than the problems. Over 50 percent of those responding considered "Sex-related behavior,"

"Profanity," "Drug-related behavior," "Tardiness," and "Truancy" as problems of very little concern to them. Four of these problems (all except "Tardiness") are often cited in the media, and one might expect them to rank high among concerns of teachers, but according to this group, these are not the major concerns. Perhaps the incidence of such problems is low in schools, despite the seriousness of the problems when they do occur, but nevertheless this is an interesting finding. The picture often painted of serious problems of drug use, sexual behavior, use of profanity and excessive truancy does not seem to be borne out by concerns of teachers in this study,even at the secondary school level where they would be most likely to occur.

No one problem accounted for more than 50 percent of the responses of either the total group of respondents or the elementary and secondary groups considered separately. "Low student self-concept" accounted for the greatest percentage of total responses, with "Failure to finish work" a close second in the rankings of problems. These items were in the top five concerns of both elementary and secondary teachers considered separately, as well as in the top two rankings for the overall group. The items relating to respect for teachers and peers were high concern items, as were dishonesty, talking and noisy behavior, and "Lack of Preparation," an item closely related to "Failure to finish work." A factor analysis of the items of concern might be of interest for a future analysis of this data, and several distinct clusters might be expected to emerge, based on these responses--the area of student self-concept, items related to respect for others, items related to noncompletion and nonpreparation of work, items related to disruption (noise, talking), items related to order (school rules, for instance), and items of a more serious, possibly immoral nature (dishonesty, stealing, use of drugs). Clearly, the nature of the respondent himself determined his choice of leading concerns to a great extent.

Data about the effectiveness of the graduate level course in Behavior Problems were much more difficult to interpret. Many responses were placed in the category of "Moderately effective," and this category has not yet been fully analyzed. The strongest preference for a particular approach used in the course only received a little over one-third of the responses for "Highly effective." This was the Humanistic approach advocated by Carl Rogers. A close second preference was the Reality Therapy approach of William Glasser. Although not strong preferences, they are somewhat surprising as first choices, again because they do not bear out the typical media image often projected of the teacher as wanting "more control" and stricter discipline in the classroom. Of all the approaches discussed in the course, the Rogers approach is perhaps the most student-centered. The choice of this approach as most effective relates closely to the choice of "Student self-concept" as an item of high concern for teachers.

Responses in this section are more complex because of the large number of "Not Applicable" responses, indicating that not all courses dealt with the same concepts and techniques, and also because opinions differed sharply on relative effectiveness, some approaches receiving both very high and very low ratings. Based on comments of respondents in the final section of the questionnaire, it would seem that the instructor of the course and the group makeup in each section determined to a great extent the relative effectiveness with which certain approaches were perceived. This was also true in the analysis of classroom activities. For instance, the item "Role-playing, games, simulations" was rated second highest in the "Highly Beneficial" category, but was also second highest in the "Not Very Beneficial" category. (Percentages would suggest that this activity was more beneficial than not, 41.0 percent ranking it on the positive side and only 18.1 percent ranking it on the negative side.) It would be difficult to say based on these data that

any one approach or activity should always be included in the course as of high value to every participant or that any approach or activity should definitely be eliminated as of no value. Students did seem to show a strong positive response to small group discussions, however, and time should probably be set aside in classes to provide for this. The finding that projects and papers were not considered as beneficial as other parts of the course is not surprising when one considers the pressure that many teachers are under at the time of taking the course and the time involved to complete such written work. The response to this item should probably not be considered as a mandate to do away with such assignments, however, as many other factors obviously lead to the ranking of this as a low priority item.

Surprisingly little difference was found in the responses of elementary and secondary teachers. This is interesting, because class members sometimes complain (and this was mentioned in some survey comments as well) that the course is too oriented toward one level or the other. Since the ranking of problems was about the same for both groups, the researchers question whether such complaints have much validity.

Much analysis remains to be carried out on these data. A more detailed look at the various categories of respondents would be useful, for instance. Questionnaires were returned from all parts of the country, and respondents represented teachers, administrators, former teachers, those who had never taught, and people in all sorts of current jobs both inside and outside of the school system. Overall, the views represent those of educators, most of whom have completed a graduate degree. A future study might be designed to survey a more random teaching population to see if their concerns and problems are the same as those identified by this group.

The researchers were most pleased with the survey response, both in

quantity and quality. The dimensions of the proposed study, both in time and allocation of resources, did not permit the researchers to do justice to the wealth of data obtained. Even though the history of the course in Behavior Problems is long, dating back to 1970, a good sampling of participants in that course over the years was obtained. The responses of these students should certainly be examined by all of those who teach the course, but the findings have much wider application. In a period when school discipline is a daily subject of news and interest, the results of this study are at once informative, revealing, and , in some cases, provocative.

APPENDIX

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

FLORIDA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
BOX 25000 ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32816

College of Education
Teaching Analysis
March 17, 1978

Dear FTU Graduate Student:

We are conducting a survey for the purposes of determining major teacher concerns in the area of discipline and how we might best address these concerns in our classes on behavior problems.

Our records indicate that during the past seven years, you were enrolled in our graduate course, EDTA 613, Behavior Problems in the Public Schools. We would also like to ask your help in evaluating your experience in this course, especially as it has been applied in your teaching or related activities.

Your answers will assist in the development and revision of our courses in classroom management. We would appreciate your inclusion of any additional comments you may have besides those directly requested. Please be assured that all individual responses will be kept confidential; in fact, you are asked not to sign your name on the form.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to us in the stamped envelope provided. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Virginia Barr-Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Sharon Lee Hiett, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

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Enc.

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QUESTIONNAIRE: Behavior Problems in the Public Schools

PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES.

College of Education
Teaching Analysis Department
Florida Technological University
Orlando, FL 32816

A. Personal Data

1. Male ____ Female ____
2. Are you currently teaching? Yes ___ No ___ Have you taught? Yes ___ No ___
3. If yes, how many years? 1-4___ 5-9___ 10-19 ___ 20+ ___
4. What grade level do you teach? (or have you taught)
   K-3 ___ 4-6 ___ 7-9 ___ 10-12 ___ Other ___
5. Did you complete EDTA 613, Behavior Problems in the Public Schools?
   Yes ___ No ___ What year? _____

B. What aspects of classroom behavior and discipline currently cause you the most concern in your students? (Please check)

	Great Concern	Moderate Concern	Little or no Concern
1. Destruction of property			
2. Dishonesty			
3. Drug-related problems			
4. Excessive talking			
5. Failure to finish work			
6. Fighting			
7. Ignoring school rules			
8. Lack of preparation			
9. Lack of respect for peers			
10. Lack of respect for teachers			
11. Lack of student involvement			
12. Low student self-concept			
13. Noisy behavior			
14. Profanity			
15. Sex-related behavior			
16. Stealing			
17. Tardiness			
18. Truancy			
19. Withdrawn behavior			
20. "Class Clown" behavior			

C. How much do you feel the following items relate to or cause discipline problems?

	Strong Cause	Moderate Cause	Little Cause
1. Parent/family attitudes			
2. Learning problems			
3. Socio-economic problems			
4. Teacher-caused problems			
5. Student self-concept			
6. School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)			
7. Other (please list)			
_____			
_____			

- OVER -

D. Indicate the degree of effectiveness you have experienced with the following concepts and techniques. "Effectiveness" may mean actual use of the approach or just added understanding you have gained through the concept. Use the "Not Applicable" column if you are not familiar with the concept or technique.

	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Not Very Effective	Not Applicable
1. Moral development concepts (Piaget, Kohlberg)				
2. Behavior modification techniques (Madsens, Skinner)				
3. Discipline and the law				
4. Values Clarification techniques (Simon, et al.)				
5. Transactional Analysis techniques (James, Jongewald, Harris)				
6. Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques (Gordon)				
7. Humanistic approaches (Rogers)				
8. Reality Therapy techniques (Glasser)				
9. Self-concept theories (Combs, Purkey)				
10. Logical Consequences (Dreikurs)				
11. Others (please list)				
_____				

E. How beneficial were these class activities in your EDTA 613 class? If the activity was not included in your section, please check the "Not Applicable" column.

	Highly Beneficial	Moderately Beneficial	Not very Beneficial	Not Applicable
1. Small group discussion				
2. Large group discussion				
3. Films and other non-print media				
4. Textbook or other assigned readings				
5. Group or panel presentations				
6. Role-playing, games, simulations				
7. Outside speakers				
8. Field trips				
9. Project/papers				
10. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator				
11. Other (please list)				
_____				

F. Do you have other concerns that relate to classroom behavior or ideas that we might incorporate into our EDTA 613 course? Please comment here or attach an additional sheet if necessary.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

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